AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please substitute the following pending claims 21-36, 40-69, 76 and 77 as replacement claims for the previously-pending claims. In this Amendment, claims 21 has been amended.

Claims 1-20. (Canceled).

21. (Currently amended) A heart valve prosthesis comprising a sewing ring comprising an annular support initially formed from a biostable polymer mixed with a steroidal agent~~(p. 32, line 8~~, said annular support overlayed by a polyester fabric overlayer, wherein said annular support provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric overlayer.

22. (Original) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 21, wherein the biostable polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyurethanes, silicones and combinations thereof.

23. (Previously presented) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 21, wherein the steroidal agent comprises an anti-inflammatory agent selected from the group consisting of dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

24. (Original) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 21, which is a bioprosthetic heart valve.

25. (Previously presented) A heart valve prosthesis comprising a sewing ring comprising a body portion initially formed from a polymer mixed with a steroidal agent, said body portion overlayed by a polyester fabric overlayer, and wherein said body portion provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric overlayer.

26. (Previously presented) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 25, wherein the heart valve prosthesis additionally comprises metal or metal alloy components.

27. (Previously presented) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 25, wherein the steroidal agent comprises and anti-inflammatory agent selected from the group consisting of dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

28. (Original) The heart valve prosthesis of claim 21, which is a mechanical heart valve.

29. (Previously presented) A bioprosthetic heart valve comprising a polymer insert containing struts attached to tissue leaflets to form a valve housing, wherein a fabric sheath encloses the polymer insert to form a sewing ring, said sewing ring attached circumferentially to the base of the valve housing, the improvement comprising the polymer insert is initially formed with a releasable steroidal agent wherein the releasable steroidal agent provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric overlayer.

30. (Original) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 29, wherein the polymer insert comprises silicone.

31. (Previously presented) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 30, wherein the polymer insert comprises radiopaque flexible silicone rubber and the steroidal agent.

32. (Previously presented) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 29, wherein the steroidal agent comprises an anti-inflammatory agent.

33. (Original) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 32, wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

34. (Previously presented) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 29, wherein the polymer insert further comprises an antimicrobial agent.

35. (Original) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 29, wherein the flow occluder comprises pericardium or aortic root tissue from an animal.

36. (Original) The bioprosthetic heart valve of claim 35, wherein the flow occluder comprises pericardium or aortic root tissue from a pig.

Claims 37-40 (Canceled).

41. (Previously presented) An annuloplasty ring comprising a body portion overlaid by a polyester fabric overlayer, the body portion initially formed from a biostable polymer mixed with a releasable steroidal agent wherein the releasable steroidal agent provides at least one effect to the fabric overlayer.

42. (Previously presented) The annuloplasty ring of claim 41, wherein the biostable polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyurethanes, silicones and combinations thereof.

43. (Previously presented) The annuloplasty ring of claim 41, wherein the steroidal agent comprises an anti-inflammatory agent selected from the group consisting of dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

44. (Previously presented) The annuloplasty ring of claim 41, wherein the annuloplasty ring further comprises an antimicrobial agent.

45. (Previously presented) A method for replacing a heart valve in a patient comprising implanting a prosthetic heart valve into the patient, wherein the prosthetic heart valve comprises a sewing ring comprising a body portion initially formed from a polymer mixed with a steroidal agent, said body portion additionally overlayed by a fabric overlayer.

46. (Original) The method of claim 45, wherein the constituent material of the body portion comprises a biostable polymer.

47. (Original) The method of claim 46, wherein the biostable polymer comprises a polymer selected from the group consisting of polyurethanes, silicones and combinations thereof.

48. (Previously presented) The method of claim 45, wherein the constituent material of the body portion additionally comprises a metal or a metal alloy.

49. (Original) The method of claim 46, wherein the metal or metal alloy comprises titanium.

50. (Original) The method of claim 45, wherein the therapeutic agent comprises an anti-inflammatory agent.

51. (Original) The method of claim 50, wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

52. (Previously presented) A method for ameliorating the inflammatory response associated with heart valve replacement in a patient comprising implanting a prosthetic heart valve into the patient, wherein the prosthetic heart valve comprises a sewing ring comprising a body portion comprising a polymer initially formed with a releasable anti-inflammatory agent, said body portion overlayed by a fabric overlayer wherein the releasable anti-inflammatory agent provides at least one therapeutic effect to at least one additional component of the heart valve.

53. (Original) The method of claim 52, wherein the fabric overlayer comprises polyester.

54. (Original) The method of claim 52, wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

55. (Original) The method of claim 52, wherein implantation of the prosthetic heart valve is accompanied by reduced pannus formation at the implant site.

56. (Previously presented) A method for ameliorating the inflammatory response associated with heart valve repair in a patient comprising implanting an annuloplasty ring into the patient, wherein the annuloplasty ring comprises a body portion comprising a biostable polymer initially formed with a releasable anti-inflammatory agent, said body portion overlaid by a fabric overlayer wherein the releasable anti-inflammatory agent provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric overlayer.

57. (Original) The method of claim 56, wherein the fabric overlayer comprises polyester.

58. (Original) The method of claim 56, wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

59. (Original) The method of claim 56, wherein implantation of the annuloplasty ring is accompanied by reduced pannus formation at the implant site.

60. (Previously presented) A method of making a medical sewing ring comprising:

initially forming the annular insert by mixing a releasable steroidal agent with a biocompatible polymer; and

enclosing the annular insert in a fabric sheath;

wherein the releasable steroidal agent provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric sheath.

61. (Original) The method of claim 60, wherein the constituent material comprises a polymer.

62. (Original) The method of claim 61, wherein the constituent material comprises a biostable polymer.

63. (Original) The method of claim 62, wherein the biostable polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyurethanes, silicones and combinations thereof.

64. (Original) The method of claim 60, wherein the constituent material comprises a metal or a metal alloy.

65. (Original) The method of claim 64, wherein the metal or metal alloy is selected from the group consisting of titanium, tantalum, titanium alloys, cobalt chrome alloys, nickel chrome alloys, stainless steels, and combinations thereof.

66. (Original) The method of claim 60, wherein the fabric sheath comprises polyester.

67. (Previously presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the steroidal agent comprises an anti-inflammatory agent.

68. (Original) The method of claim 67, wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is dexamethasone, a derivative thereof, or a salt thereof.

69. (Currently amended) The method of claim 60, wherein the annular insert further comprises an antimicrobial agent.

70-75. (Canceled).

76. (Previously presented) An annuloplasty ring consisting of a body portion overlaid by a polyester fabric overlayer, the body portion initially formed from a biostable polymer mixed with a releasable therapeutic agent wherein the releasable therapeutic agent provides a therapeutic effect to the fabric overlayer.

77. (Previously presented) A method of making a medical sewing ring the method consisting:

initially forming the annular insert by mixing a releasable therapeutic agent with a biocompatible polymer; and

enclosing the annular insert in a fabric sheath;

wherein the releasable therapeutic agent provides at least one therapeutic effect to the fabric sheath.